

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Previously Presented) A computer implemented method:  
estimating an expected component surplus by  
    identifying a plurality of components required to produce a product;  
    defining a vector of connect rates for the components;  
    defining an uncancelable level for each of the components, each of the  
        uncancelable levels defining a quantity of the each of the components  
        below which the quantity of the each of the components cannot be  
        liquidated without incurring a charge;  
    assuming that a selected one of the components is available at least at an  
        uncancelable level of the uncancelable levels corresponding to the selected  
        one of the components; and  
    computing the expected component surplus for the selected component using a  
        mean production for the product, the uncancelable level and the vector of  
        connect rates, wherein  
        the computing is performed by a computer.
2. (Previously Presented) The computer implemented method of claim 1, the  
estimating further comprising:  
    defining a planned level for the each of the components, each of the planned levels  
        defining a quantity at which a corresponding one of the components is expected to  
        be available.
3. (Previously Presented) The computer implemented method of claim 2, the  
estimating further comprising:  
    assuming that each of the remaining ones of the components is available at the planned  
        level corresponding to the each of the remaining ones of the components, wherein  
        the remaining ones of the components are ones of the components other than the  
        selected one of the components.

4. (Previously Presented) The computer implemented method of claim 3, the estimating further comprising:  
using the planned levels in the computing the expected component surplus.

5. (Previously Presented) The computer implemented method of claim 4, the estimating further comprising:  
estimating the mean production for the product.

6 - 15. (Cancelled)